



## MDCR/MCRC E-newsletter for April 30, 2015

### [County not giving up after losing discrimination trial](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/30

Ann Arbor — Washtenaw County is appealing a nearly \$1.2 million verdict in favor of a Muslim man who said he was called a terrorist and repeatedly passed over for promotions.

### [Bay County judge says gay marriage case shows complexity of mixing constitutional, social issues](#)

From MLive, 4/29

BAY CITY – A Bay County judge says he's surprised social issues, more so than the Constitution, are at the heart of the gay marriage debate now sitting in the hands of the United States Supreme Court.

### [Michigan Democrats seek 'citizen co-sponsors' on new LGBT non-discrimination bill](#)

From MLive, 4/29

Michigan Democrats are seeking "citizen co-sponsors" on new legislation that would extend statewide non-discrimination protections to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender residents.

### [Cops praised, criticized at meeting after ICE shooting](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/29

Police were both praised and criticized during an emotional meeting Wednesday between leaders of several law enforcement agencies and community members concerned and outraged about the shooting death of armed robbery suspect Terrance Kellom.

### [Gender Bias Issue Could Tip Chief Justice Roberts Into Ruling for Gay Marriage](#)

From the New York Times, 4/29

WASHINGTON — In a telling moment at Tuesday's Supreme Court arguments over same-sex marriage, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. suggested that he may have found a way to cast a vote in favor of the gay and lesbian couples in the case.

### [For same-sex skeptics, a scary new world](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/29

WASHINGTON — One man bellowed like a wounded beast, issuing dire forecasts of God's wrath as federal marshals dragged him bodily from the highest court in the land.

### [Bloomfield Hills forum aims for more inclusive schools](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/29

Students and parents shared ideas Tuesday about how to make the Bloomfield Hills Schools district more inclusive after a boy was taunted and called racial slurs on a school bus last month.

#### [Pivotal justice asks tough questions on gay marriage](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/29

Washington — The Supreme Court grappled Tuesday with the weighty implication of creating a constitutional right for gay couples to marry, even though many commentators and some conservative justices previously suggested it was largely a foregone conclusion.

#### [Senator makes case for Religious Freedom Act, disputes 'license to discriminate' label](#)

From MLive, 4/29

LANSING — State Sen. Mike Shirkey made his case Tuesday for why Michigan should adopt a proposed Religious Freedom Restoration Act, telling colleagues that his bill would clear up legal ambiguity and clarify First Amendment rights.

#### [Federal officer in Detroit shooting has checkered past](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/29

Detroit — The federal officer who shot and killed a Detroit man Monday was criminally charged seven years ago after allegedly pointing his department-issued handgun at his wife's head, The News has learned.

#### [Supreme Court questions show same-sex marriage split](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/28

WASHINGTON — For better or worse, the fate of Michigan's same-sex marriage ban -- and same-sex marriage bans across the nation -- now rests squarely with the U.S. Supreme Court.

#### [Detroit residents march peacefully day after federal agent kills man during raid](#)

From MLive, 4/28

DETROIT – Detroit residents and activists exhibited anger, sadness, frustration and confusion in the wake of the fatal shooting of a wanted 20-year-old fugitive, Terrance Kellom, by a federal agent Monday.

#### [Religious Freedom Restoration Act bad for business, Michigan companies tell lawmakers](#)

From MLive, 4/28

A handful of leading Michigan businesses on Tuesday urged state lawmakers to hold off on a proposed Religious Freedom Restoration Act, saying the measure could have negative economic consequences.

#### [4-year-old Madison isn't defined by autism diagnosis, parents say](#)

From MLive, 4/28

Madison Brank's laugh is infectious.

#### [Supreme Court, I'm tired of being only 'sort of' married](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/27

When it comes to marriage, my legal status is murky. Before I married another woman in New York in 2013, I was clearly a "single woman" who happened to want to have the right to marry another woman, but I was not "married." For two years now, I've been married -- well, sort-of married or sometimes married.

#### [More and more Deaf jurors are serving in local courts](#)

From WXYZ, 4/27

DETROIT – Justice is supposed to be blind, but what if it's also Deaf? The 7 Investigators have learned that jurors who are Deaf are serving on juries more and more.

#### [Snyder stance on gay marriage sparks debate](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/27

Lansing — Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder may have dodged a historical bullet when an Ohio lawsuit became the title name of a U.S. Supreme Court case that may lead to legalization of same-sex marriage in America.

#### **Equality Michigan Releases RFRA Action Alert**

From MIRS, 4/27

Complete with a list of potential headlines if the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) bill is adopted, the Equality Michigan group over the weekend fired off an "Action Alert" urging members to "stand up" against efforts to adopt the RFRA.

The legislation, slated to be heard 3 p.m. Tuesday in the Senate Judiciary Committee, is designed to codify a federal version of the law to protect religious freedoms for all citizens, according to sponsors (See "RFRA Legislation Will Have Testimony-Only Hearing In Senate Committee," 4/23/15).

Opponents see it as an "open door" for further discrimination against the LGBT community.

As such, Equality Michigan is predicting the following headlines:

"Police Officer Refuses to Defend Synagogue, Cites His Religious Beliefs."

"Husband Says Religious Freedom Justifies Domestic Violence."

"Landlord: Religious Freedom Means It's OK to Deny Lease to Single Mom."

The group referring to those possible headlines suggests, "If some legislators in Lansing get their way, these headlines could begin appearing in your local paper. Act now to prevent that!"

The email, obtained by MIRS, argues that if adopted, the law would "place too much power in the hands of the courts," which would allow them to "choose which religions they want to protect and who can be exempt from the law."

Equality Michigan believes freedom of religion is already protected in both the U.S. and state constitutions and "we cannot allow people to refuse to follow every law they don't like."

#### [Blind protest airport bus stop move](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/26

Romulus — The National Federal of the Blind of Michigan picketed outside the McNamara Terminal Sunday afternoon to bring attention to the relocation of a public transportation bus stop — a move they say proves a particular hardship to visually impaired travelers.

#### [Flint-area legislators call for action by Florida officials following racial harassment claims](#)

From MLive, 4/26

Three Flint-area legislators are calling on the Florida State Legislature to take some action after claims of racial harassment by a group of students and chaperones at a hotel and restaurant in the Sunshine State.

[Local restaurant asks leader dog to leave because diners felt uncomfortable](#)

From WXYZ, 4/25

A golden retriever leader dog was not welcome at the Grand Azteca restaurant in Fraser.

[No charges in altercation at Dearborn Kroger](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/24

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said today she would not press charges in the case of a 61-year-old Arab-American Muslim man in Dearborn who said he was racially assaulted in a Kroger store in Dearborn.

[Hilton: Human trafficking happens in Michigan](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/24

Frequently, when I speak or write about human trafficking, a typical comment is “Well, it doesn’t happen here.”

[Detroit-area funeral home loses bid to dismiss lawsuit over firing of transgender employee](#)

From WDIV, 4/23

The government has cleared an important hurdle in a discrimination lawsuit filed on behalf of a transgender employee who was fired by a Detroit-area funeral home.

**Audit Recommends Migrant Housing Monitoring**

From Gongwer, 4/23

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development needs to improve its monitoring of migrant housing, Auditor General Doug Ringler said in a report issued Thursday.

The performance audit, of the department's Environmental Stewardship Division for the period October 1, 2011, through June 30, 2014, found the agency was not ensuring that it had a complete listing of migrant housing facilities and was not ensuring that prior violations were corrected before issuing new licenses.

Of the 845 migrant housing camps in the department's database, 10 had no inspection listed, 12 were not inspected until after their occupancy date, two operated about two months without a license and two had temporary licenses for more than 90 days.

The department agreed with the need to improve its records and said it had implemented new processes, but also noted that, with 2,779 inspection records, the error rate was about 0.5 percent.

Auditors also recommended the department ensure violations are corrected. Of 15 randomly selected camps, auditors found four with repeat violations. The department said it had implemented a new process that made tracking violations easier.

Auditors also noted that the funding for the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program is counterintuitive, given that administration costs are covered by tax credits repaid by participants leaving the program, but the program is designed to encourage them to stay.

The program gives tax credits to farmers who sign agreements to keep their land in agricultural production or open space for at least 10 years, with extensions allowed.

Revenue to the program has also declined because a 1996 change in the law allowed landowners planning to leave the program to simply not claim the tax credit for the final seven years, rather than repay those credits after leaving the program. The department noted it also has \$11.7 million in outstanding liens on property that will not be repaid until the land is sold or developed. Auditors noted the owners had no incentive to repay the funds because there is no interest charged on them.

Auditors also noted that, because officials with the program did not have the right to inspect the land under agreement, they had no way to enforce the agreements.

#### [Anti-gay auto shop owner: Coming to a church near you?](#)

From MLive, 4/23

GRANDVILLE – Dieseltex owner Brian Klawiter, whose anti-gay viewpoints on Facebook have gained national attention, is ready to share his message at area churches.

#### [Buss: Millennials in Michigan: Should I stay or should I go](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/23

For today's millennials, a community's political environment and culture might influence where they choose to live. Unfortunately for Michigan, whether or not those young people decide to live in the state is more critical than ever before.

#### [Adoption agencies shouldn't discriminate](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/23

Last month, the state House passed a package of bills that would allow faith-based foster care and adoption agencies to discriminate and turn away couples that are gay, unmarried, of another faith or threaten the "sincerely held religious beliefs" of a child-placing agency.

#### [Native American group holds protest at EMU following racial incident](#)

From MLive, 4/22

Native Americans attending a rally at Eastern Michigan University Wednesday had a message for the dozen or so students involved in a recent racial incident: apologize.

#### [EMU announces chief diversity officer job after racially charged incidents](#)

From MLive, 4/22

President Susan Martin announced Wednesday that Eastern Michigan University was creating a chief diversity officer.

#### [Gay couple's request that Michigan recognize out-of-state marriage denied](#)

From MLive, 4/22

GRAND RAPIDS – A federal judge has refused a gay couple's request he lift a stay on their lawsuit and order their out-of-state marriage be recognized in Michigan.

#### [Livonia man removes nooses after uproar](#)

From WXYZ, 4/21

LIVONIA – It all started with neighbors complaining to 7 Action News about a noose hanging from Robert Tomanovich's front yard, next to a Confederate flag.

#### [Census Bureau to test Arab American category](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/21

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Census Bureau is moving forward with a pilot program to test whether to include a new category in the 2020 Census for people of Middle East and North Africa descent.

#### [Woman strip-searched at Detroit airport settles lawsuit](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/21

Detroit — A woman of Arab and Jewish descent who was strip-searched at Detroit Metropolitan Airport has reached a settlement in a lawsuit filed on her behalf, the American Civil Liberties Union said Tuesday.

#### [Post-Ferguson events look to bolster citizen-police relations in Muskegon](#)

From MLive, 4/21

MUSKEGON – A large gathering of community leaders and citizens joined law enforcement in December to begin a conversation on improving relations in Muskegon.

#### [Lessons From #RaceTogether](#)

From the New York Times, 4/21

Howard Schultz has a way of making a believer out of you.

#### [Dieseltec seeks Grandville business license, with caveat, after anti-gay stance brings attention](#)

From MLive, 4/20

GRANDVILLE – Dieseltec has filed paperwork and paid an associated \$100 fee for a city business license, though its owner maintains that a related city ordinance violates the U.S. Constitution.

#### [1.5 Million Missing Black Men](#)

From the New York Times, 4/20

In New York, almost 120,000 black men between the ages of 25 and 54 are missing from everyday life. In Chicago, 45,000 are, and more than 30,000 are missing in Philadelphia. Across the South — from North Charleston, S.C., through Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi and up into Ferguson, Mo. — hundreds of thousands more are missing.

#### [Religious symbols spur spirited battle in west Michigan](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/20

Grand Haven — If the battle over religious symbols on public property was over in western Michigan, someone forgot to tell symbol supporters.

#### [Why Oakland prosecutor took on bus bullies](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/17

Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper was clear Thursday about why she filed petitions recommending charges be leveled against two boys who were videotaped repeatedly calling a 13-year-old classmate the N-word.

#### [Letter: Adults with autism need help, too](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/17

I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome in February 2007 at 35, but I've had it since I was a kid.

#### [LGBT protections in Grandville after anti-gay Facebook post? Mayor says maybe](#)

From MLive, 4/17

GRANDVILLE – Mayor Steve Maas doesn't think Brian Klawiter's "unkind" words about gay people represent the Grandville community. That said, he's not sure Grandville would support LGBT protections like those in East Grand Rapids and other Michigan cities.

#### [Racial Terror, Fast and Slow](#)

From the New York Times, 4/17

WASHINGTON — IN the past two years, this country has held events commemorating 50 years since the triumphs and key struggles of the civil rights movement: the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act and, most recently, the "Bloody Sunday" march in Selma, Ala.

#### [Angie's List CEO quits to re-enter politics in Indiana](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/16

Bill Oesterle is quitting as CEO of Angie's List, saying he wants to re-enter state politics and help repair the "shellacking" Indiana's image took from the passage of the "religious freedom" act.

#### [U-M officials say violent protests damaging to minority enrollment issue](#)

From MLive, 4/16

Officials at the University of Michigan said they are deeply concerned with the university's minority enrollment, but the group of protesters who violently disrupted the regularly scheduled Board of Regents meeting Thursday, April 16, were counterproductive in their efforts to bring about any resolve to the issue.

#### [Washtenaw official proposes sensitivity training in wake of 'religious freedom' legislation](#)

From MLive, 4/16

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners meeting had neared adjournment Wednesday night when commissioner Ronnie Peterson said he wanted to bring a topic up for discussion.

#### [Miss Michigan KT Maviglia backs hearing aid insurance bill at state Capitol](#)

From MLive, 4/15

In the video above, Miss Michigan 2014 KT Maviglia of Dundee discusses pending legislation that would require insurance carriers to cover hearing aids for young people up to the age of 21. Maviglia, who was diagnosed with sensorineural hearing loss at age 9, joined sponsoring Sen. Dale Zorn, R-Ida, at the Michigan Capitol on April 15.

#### [Auto shop owner on Facebook: He'll refuse service to openly gay people](#)

From MLive, 4/15 (updated 4/22)

The owner of a West Michigan auto repair shop announced on Facebook he wouldn't hesitate to refuse to do business with openly gay customers.

#### [Despite our differences, we are all in this together](#)

From the Times Herald, 4/15

April is Autism Awareness Month, although I am quite aware of autism every day of my. I have a son, now 28, who has autism.

#### [Parents lobby for district to keep deaf program](#)

From the Press and Guide, 4/15

Dozens of parents, deaf advocates and former students flocked to the Dearborn Public School Board meeting on Monday night to plead for the district to keep its program for hearing-impaired students.

#### [Equal pay for equal work? Michigan women will earn as much as men in 2086](#)

From MLive, 4/14

Michigan Democrats once again introduced the equal pay day legislation to close the gap between male and female wages, but added some bills they hope can garner bipartisan support.

#### [Viola Liuzzo's civil rights legacy honored](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/12

Detroit — Sally Liuzzo was only 6 the last time she saw her mom alive.

#### [We lose the longer we wait to reform work visas](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/11

April can be the make or break month for U.S. corporations that goes beyond tax time. It is when businesses file H-1B petitions in hopes to win the coveted visa lottery that allows foreign-born workers to fill job vacancies here.

#### [State groups strengthen police, community ties](#)

From Capitol News Service, 4/10

LANSING — As communities across the country confront mistrust between police and citizens, organizations across Michigan are working to build relationships that officials hope can avoid unrest when something goes wrong.

#### [State pushes job opportunities for disabled workers](#)

From Capitol News Service, 4/10

LANSING — Workers with disabilities are often overlooked, even if they have the right skills for a job, state officials say.

#### [Killings by police display man's inhumanity to man](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/9

"Like a dog in the street" is the cliché assigned to cold-blooded killings.

#### [Woman Sues Dearborn For Violation Of Rights](#)

From Between the Lines/PrideSource, 4/9

The city of Dearborn is being sued by a Detroit woman who alleges the city violated her rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act during a traffic stop in August of 2012. Shalandra Jones is arguing in court that when Dearborn Police Officer David Lacey ticketed her for possession of marijuana, he did so because of her HIV-positive status.

#### [Obama to Call for End to 'Conversion' Therapies for Gay and Transgender Youth](#)

From the New York Times, 4/8

WASHINGTON — A 17-year-old transgender youth, Leelah Alcorn, stunned her friends and a vast Internet audience in December when she threw herself in front of a tractor-trailer after writing in an online suicide note that religious therapists had tried to convert her back to being a boy.

#### [East Asian influx slowly changes East Lansing](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/8

East Lansing — Leo Di zipped into the strip mall, ducked into a laundromat to pick up his clothes and left his 2014 Maserati running outside.

#### [Why businesses should, and should not, be able to refuse service to LGBT people](#)

From MLive, 4/7

As a rabbi, I have the right not to officiate at a wedding if it does not meet my religious criteria. For example, if both parties are not Jewish, I cannot officiate. Does a florist or a baker legally have the same right to refuse to serve such a couple? Indiana and Arkansas approved amended versions of a Religious Freedom Restoration Act that raised such questions regarding refusing to serve same sex couples.

#### [Disability will be conquered this century, bionic limb pioneer tells West Michigan Design Week](#)

From MLive, 4/6

Grand Rapids – Hugh Herr said he was "shocked and disgusted" in 1982, when at age 17, he was outfitted with a pair of prosthetic legs after he lost both legs above the knees in a mountain climbing accident.

#### [Gary Glenn apologizes for 'agenda alert' about Midland newspaper's gay editor](#)

From MLive, 4/5

MIDLAND – State Rep. Gary Glenn, R-Larkin Township, has responded to the outcry over recent posts on social media with a public apology.

#### [Time Michigan got on the right side of history](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 4/4

You can stand on the wrong side of history for only so long.

#### [Dearborn, Wayne County join Take on Hate campaign](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/4

A local effort aiming to address bias or discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities gained more backing from Metro Detroit leaders this week.

#### [Feds remind Michigan summer camps about ADA compliance](#)

From the Detroit News, 4/4

With summer camp season just weeks away, federal authorities are reminding operators they need to be sure facilities can accommodate children with disabilities.

#### [Former MSU player shares his experience of being bullied](#)

From KCTV, 4/3

LAWRENCE, KS (KCTV) - When you think of people who are bullied the first type of person would probably not be a 6-foot-9 inch former division one college basketball player with autism.

#### **Class Action Filed Against State Prisons Over Outdated Deaf Services**

From MIRS, 4/3

The deaf and hard of hearing in the state's prisons are being punished for not following spoken orders issued to them and then, in some case, are being given disciplinary hearings without the benefit of an interpreter or a hearing aid, according to a class action lawsuit filed this morning by Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, Inc. (MPAS).

The federal class action suit against the Department of Corrections (DOC) also claims the deaf aren't being given access to the videophones now common with the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Chris DAVIS, an attorney handling the case for MPAS, said as a result of the inmates' treatment in prison, these inmates are forced to serve their time largely isolated from, and are unable to effectively communicate with, other individuals.

Speaking on Michigan's Big Show today, Davis said MPAS has tried to work with the DOC for the last three months to bring video services into the prisons to help inmates communicate with the outside world, but their requests have not been honored. Videophones are now the standard method of telecommunication for speakers of American Sign Language.

Instead, state prisons are being afforded "50-year-old," "archaic" text-based telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDDs) or teletypewriters (TTYs), which aren't an option for many ASL speakers, for whom written English is a second language.

All three defendants in the case -- Mary Ann McBRIDE, Brian WITTMAN and Ralph WILLIAMS -- had hearing difficulties before entering prison, Davis said.

"Without access to a videophone, (McBride), for example, is unable to communicate with her deaf friends and relatives outside of prison, including her two brothers," reads the lawsuit.

DOC spokesperson Chris GAUTZ said the department does not comment on legal action.

Also being brought into the suit is the Washington D.C.-based Prisoners' Rights Project, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (WLC).

"Unfortunately, it is clear that Michigan's treatment of its deaf and hard of hearing prisoners violates federal law," said WLC Director Deborah GOLDEN in a press release this morning. "While Michigan's mistreatment of deaf prisoners is not unique, as reflected by several cases filed by WLC around the country involving federal and state prisons, such litigation has produced progress in achieving fair treatment for deaf prisoners."

The center worked out a settlement for inmates in Virginia in 2010, for example, which gave inmates access to interpreters, videophones and visual aides for in-prison announcements.

"All this can be done in a way that works with the deaf and hard of hearing without raising security or costs concerns," said Elliot MINCBERG of WLC.

In the past, two separate lawsuits also have been filed against the federal prison system for deaf inmates. Similar suits also were filed in the prison systems in Kentucky and Maryland.

According to the lawsuit, Wittman's requests for an interpreter during medical visits were denied.

Also, the deaf inmates say they have been disciplined for not following orders that they could not hear. They also are not able to defend themselves in hearings or proceeds stemming from charges brought against them because they can't communicate with hearing officers and investigators.

Williams claims he wasn't able to use a hearing aid during one proceeding in which he was unable to hear or communicate. As a result, Williams was forced to serve 40 days in solitary confinement, also without being permitted to access his hearing aid, according to the suit.

The suit finally claims that visual safety alerts and aids are not available in prisons, which puts deaf inmates in dangerous situations. Inmates also aren't being made aware of announcements, such as a lockdown, roll call or count.

MPAS is urging the court to force the DOC to provide services to the deaf and for staff to go through training on how to better work with this population.

"In order to be a humane society, we have to treat people with some decency, so that when they come out of prison they can be rehabilitated and contribute to society," Davis said.

As it stands, without the necessary services, these inmates are not able to participate in religious programs or rehabilitation programs.

Davis also said the suit is being filed in federal court because they are filing suit based on federal laws -- the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. Constitutional claims on the First and Fourteenth amendments also are being made.

[Authorities dismiss claim from woman who said she wasn't hired as snow plow driver because of gender](#)  
From MLive, 4/1

A discrimination claim against the Jackson County Department of Transportation has been dismissed, according to an official from Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

[Former Burton employee sues city, mayor on claim of age discrimination](#)  
From MLive, 4/1

BURTON – A former administrative assistant has filed a lawsuit against the city of Burton and Mayor Paula Zelenko for more than \$25,000, claiming she was given incorrect information about the consequences of her retirement date.

[Dearborn backs effort to 'Take On Hate' toward Arab and Muslim Americans](#)  
From MLive, 4/1

The Dearborn City Council endorsed the national campaign "Take On Hate" on Tuesday night to take a stand against bias and discrimination toward Arab and Muslim Americans.

[Biz backlash over Indiana RFRA law could hit Mich.](#)  
From the Lansing State Journal, 3/31

The backlash over Indiana becoming the 20th state to pass a Religious Freedom Restoration Act last week could extend to Michigan if similar legislation already in the hopper moves to the front of the line at the state Capitol.

[Helping Students Grow After Bullying Incidents](#)  
From the School News Network, 3/31

Kent ISD, MI — When Tarena VanDyke was accused of bullying another student, it really hurt, she said.